

Billy, I Mean. by Reylinne

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Summary:

I still felt close to everyone else. The kids, Nance, Jonathan.
But he was my best friend.
Billy, I mean.

Billy, I Mean.

Author's Note:

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He had a broken nose at graduation.

Billy, I mean.

In truth, I didn't think too much about it.

About him, I mean.

I didn't think twice about how he got it, what led up to it being broken, how he might have suffered both before and afterwards. I didn't think anything about Billy, to be honest, except for the fact that he was such an ignorant asshole up until he'd randomly apologised out of the blue to me one day, and then invited me to his birthday party a week later.

I'd said no, of course.

To his invitation, I mean.

We'd reached a truce after Christmas break, Billy and I. He wasn't really such a big dick to Max anymore, and sometimes I thought that maybe he was nice. A little bit. He'd come to pick her up and he'd even smile at me every once in awhile. I often thought about maybe inviting him inside to hang out with us, because maybe he didn't really have any friends. Maybe he wanted to come inside.

But I didn't.

Invite him in, I mean.

We had joined baseball in the spring and we did good. We made it to State, and won. And he'd given me a hug. He'd looked at me funny that day, Billy did. He'd given me a hug and stared at me with those eyes of his, hollow and empty. And he lingered, held on just a little

too long for my taste.

So I pushed him away.

Literally pushed Billy, I mean.

I didn't think much about it. I thought he was being weird or making fun of me, so I left it alone. Left him alone. I celebrated the win with the kids that night, plus Nancy, Jonathan, Joyce and Hopper. When Billy dropped Max off at the pizza place with us, he looked at me apologetically. And I invited him to join us. And he did.

It was awkward at first.

All of us together, I mean.

Hopper got along with Billy pretty well when he wasn't busy arresting him for something. I'd never seen Billy Hargrove laugh, and it was kind of weird. He was cracking jokes with the kids as if he'd been their best friend for their entire lives.

They told me later that maybe Billy could hang out with us more.

The kids, I mean.

I told them that I don't make the rules, and that if they want Billy to hang out with us all that they'd just have to ask and they agreed. So they did. And he said sure, he wasn't really doing anything else. He acted like he was too cool to hang out with kids at first, but I know that he was happy to get asked. He had a little sparkle in his eyes then, a fullness in there that wasn't there previously.

We became friends.

Me n' Billy, I mean.

We'd talk for hours, days. We'd hang out during the summertime after work. I made excuses to go visit him at his job at the auto shop, and he told me he wanted to be a police officer.

"You wanna be a cop? C'mon, isn't that a little ironic?" I'd said.

“Oh please, Harrington, you know I’d be great at tackling bad guys.”

“What bad guys? We live in *Hawkins*. ” But I knew better.

Billy had just shrugged. As if he was hurt that I poked fun at his new dream.

“That’s great, Billy.” I’d said, given him a hug right there in the shop where everyone could see. Given a hug to my friend.

The vibes of summertime were the best. S’mores around the fire at night, the sound of Billy’s Camaro, the way the water sparkled at the quarry, the scent of food being grilled and the laughter of friends around a picnic table. Fresh out of high school, I felt wild and free and just wanted to have the time of my life. And I did. I still felt close to everyone else. The kids, Nance, Jonathan.

But he was my best friend.

Billy, I mean.

We’d gone to concerts, we’d traveled around, he’d taken me to California with him for a week. I felt like I was finally living my life, even though I hated working for my dad’s company. I hated being an adult, but I felt alive when I was with Billy. My best friend.

He’d shown up at my door once at seven in the morning.

Billy, I mean.

He waved a letter in my face with a grin so broad it looked like he was going to pop his cheeks. It was a letter of acceptance to the police academy for the fall. And he was so excited. So excited. He kept rambling on about how he was finally going to make something of himself and he couldn’t wait to rub it in Neil’s face.

I didn’t pay attention to who he was talking about.

Neil, I mean.

I pulled him in for an embrace, and he held me so close once again. Except this time it was me who didn’t let go. He was so dear to me,

so kind and so pure. And I hadn't expected it at all, no, definitely not. I felt like I didn't know who I was at that point anymore, but it was a good thing. He pulled away finally and he thanked me for everything and he rested his head on my shoulder and held his hand on the back of my head and I felt safe. Summertime flew by and Billy was starting to get nervous and anxious about the academy. I assured him he'd do great and be amazing and that I was so proud of him.

And one night at the quarry a week before he was set to start school again, he told me he was in love with me.

Billy, I mean.

I didn't know how to react, so I sat there stunned for awhile. I didn't really say anything to him, and I think I made him feel bad. I followed him home and I told him that it took me off guard and he said that he felt stupid and I apologised and apologised again. And he assured me it was fine.

And I told him I think maybe I felt the same.

Falling in love with him, I mean.

It was scary and new for both of us but it was exciting and he kissed me. And I felt so melty, so happy, so in bliss.

And then he caught us.

Neil, I mean.

I didn't know who Neil was, I'd never been inside of Billy's house or talked to Max about her home life really. Not because I didn't care but because neither of them were keen on talking about it really, which was fine. I didn't necessarily tell everyone about my practically nonexistent parents either.

Billy looked back at me after Neil opened the door and waved goodbye, and I told him I'd see him tomorrow.

I planned a surprise party for him.

For Billy, I mean.

For getting accepted and starting a new chapter of his life. I'd told everyone and we'd set everything up at the pizza place, and we were all there. Nancy, Jonathan, Hopper, Joyce, Will, Max, Mike, Eleven, Lucas, Dustin, Me.

And he got the call.

Hopper, I mean.

The phone at the pizza place rang and they called him over. He'd dropped the glass he was holding, and it shattered all over the floor. And in that moment, my life felt like slow motion. My heart sunk out of my chest, and I felt like I couldn't breathe.

They'd found the body in his bedroom.

Billy's body, I mean.

Susan had been staying at her sister's house and Max had spent the night with Eleven and Hopper. Billy had been writing in a journal, about how excited he was about telling me his feelings and his anxiety about starting something so new and it was covered with blood. Neil had turned himself in, confessed to taking it a little too far this time. Admitted to being angry that his son was a "faggot". Didn't know about the academy. Said maybe then he wouldn't have been mad.

He's a liar.

Neil, I mean.

That day, clear blue skies turned to dull grey. I have never hated someone so much in my entire life. I threw up then, in the pizza place. I screamed, doubled over and sobbing then, in the pizza place. I looked up through teary eyes at everyone's expressions, hollow and numb. Crying, hurting. For someone who had started out as maybe our 'enemy'. Joyce hugged me, tighter than I'd ever been embraced. Or maybe it just felt that way because I couldn't feel anything.

He looked beautiful.

Billy, at his funeral, I mean.

I didn't see him, because they said it was better if we didn't look inside the casket, but I knew he looked beautiful. I knew it.

We mourned that day.

Hawkins, I mean.

Even everyone that Billy thought didn't like him showed up. The parlor was so full that the line extended outside, and I thought to myself about how less than two years ago we never had funerals for young people here in Hawkins. Too much death and despair in this town. It got to Will a lot. He said he couldn't believe that people cried like this for him when they thought he died. So I gave him a hug. The Hawkins Police force gave him a salute, even though he wasn't a member yet. Hopper looked at me and told me he would have made a great officer.

She gave me the keys to his Camaro.

Susan, I mean.

She handed them to me with tears in her eyes and told me that Billy wouldn't stop talking about how we had driven across the country in it. How much fun he'd had and how he was so lucky to have a friend like me. And I let out a breath then, and it was surreal.

I got permission from the mayor to leave it at the quarry.

Billy's Camaro, I mean.

We decorated it with flowers and mixed cassette tapes, and I would go there and clean it off sometimes, wipe it down because I could practically hear Billy rambling on about there being dirt on his baby.

I'd sat on the hood, parked there looking out at the water. I remembered how we'd sat in this spot many a night. I wanted him to be able to feel close to the water because he missed the sea, I think.

He had a broken nose at graduation.

Billy, I mean.

And I hadn't asked him about it. I hadn't paid it much mind. And

maybe if I had, I could have helped him escape. Maybe he'd be here with me. Maybe he'd have started school, maybe he'd be the best cop ever. Maybe he'd have done amazing things. No, I knew he would have.

And here I sit, writing in a journal like he had been when his life was taken from him. Taken from me.. And I wish that I could change so much. I'm filled with so much regret and bitterness. And I'll always have the what-ifs in the back of my nearly empty mind. And I wish I could have kept him safe like how he made me feel.

He deserved better. He *deserves* so much better.

Billy, I mean.

I love you. And I'm sorry.

Author's Note:

I made myself cry writing this. Yikes.

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